

# Students Succeed with School Meals

## Teachers Walking the Walk

Research shows that students who eat school lunch eat less fat than students who bring their lunch from home. Students who eat school lunch eat more fruits, vegetables and drink more milk. They are less likely to drink soda and fruit drinks. Furthermore, students who eat school meals are more likely to be at a healthy weight. Healthier school meals benefit all students. Research shows that healthier students who eat balanced meals and engage in regular physical activity are more alert in the classroom, have fewer behavior problems and fewer absences. These students also have increased test scores.

Learning to make the healthy food choices contributes to student success. The cafeteria is just like any other part of the school. It is a place where students should learn through their daily food choices how to make the healthiest choices. It is just like learning to read, to write and to do math. As a teacher, you have tremendous influence over your students. Here are some things you can do to guide their food and beverage choices in a positive direction.

- ◆ Let your students see you eat nutritious foods at school – things like fruits, vegetables, whole-grains and low-fat or fat-free dairy products. Steer clear of fast food and sugary drinks.
- ◆ Refrain from talk about dieting in front of students, as well as your personal food likes and dislikes.
- ◆ Review the lunch menu with your students and discuss healthy options.
- ◆ If you have questions about the choices for school meals, talk with your cafeteria manager or Child Nutrition Director. There are several planning options available for school meals programs. Knowing which is used in your school will make it easier for you and your students at meal times.
- ◆ Recognize that not all children like the same foods or that they may change their minds once they get to the cafeteria.
- ◆ Invite the cafeteria staff to come to your classroom and talk about how school meals are prepared.
- ◆ If you discover a student who is hungry or comes to school without breakfast, encourage him or her to eat school breakfast or lunch. Talk with your Child Nutrition Director or principal to see if the student is signed up for free or reduced-price meals.
- ◆ Be an advocate for school breakfast – statistics show that students who eat breakfast do better in school.
- ◆ Give students consistent messages about eating smart and moving more.
- ◆ Serve only nutritious foods in your classroom, at school parties and after-school events.
- ◆ Have fundraising events with non-food items. Think about things that promote school spirit, or include eating smart and moving more messages.
- ◆ Reward your students with non-food items like stickers, pencils, craft items or other items you can purchase at discount stores.

Source: <https://fns.state.mn.us/FNSProg/NSLP/NSLPResource.htm>



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